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## **CIVIC ORCHESTRA OF CHICAGO ANNOUNCES PROGRAM DETAILS FOR 2025/26 SEASON PERFORMANCES**

CHICAGO — The Civic Orchestra of Chicago, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's training ensemble for emerging professional musicians, announces program details for its 107th season in 2025/26. Anchored by mainstage concerts in Orchestra Hall featuring audience favorites such as Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, Dvořák's Seventh Symphony, Holst's *The Planets* and Mahler's First Symphony, the season includes an expanded series of free community concerts in venues across the Chicago area. Tickets for Civic Orchestra concerts at Symphony Center are pay what you wish, starting at \$5. Tickets to Civic concerts in community venues are free, but advance reservations are required. All ticket reservations open two weeks prior to the performance date. More information is available at [cso.org](https://cso.org).

The Civic Orchestra will be led by Principal Conductor Ken-David Masur for several programs at Symphony Center and in the community. The season's roster of guest conductors includes return appearances by Thomas Wilkins, Carlos Miguel Prieto and Erina Yashima, and Civic podium debuts for Alpesh Chauhan and Mallory Thompson. In addition to the aforementioned works, other repertoire highlights include Copland Symphony No. 3, Lutosławski Concerto for Orchestra, Hindemith *Symphonic Metamorphosis*, Elgar *In the South*, and Price *Ethiopia's Shadow in America*, as well as compelling contemporary works by Reena Esmail, Michael Abels, James Lee III, Iman Habibi and others. The orchestra is joined by special guest artists, as well, including Apollo Chorus of Chicago, the Chicago Black-music collective D-Composed, and the full company of singers from the Patrick G. and Shirley W. Ryan Opera Center at Lyric Opera of Chicago.

The 2025/26 Season also includes special events that highlight the Civic Orchestra's commitment to nurturing young musicians and community engagement. The 2026 Crain-Maling Foundation CSO Young Artists Competition finals (for strings) led by guest conductor Naomi Woo features Illinois' most talented youth competing for an

opportunity to appear as soloist with members of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in the following season. On June 12, 2026, the Young Composers Initiative, which is led by former CSO Mead Composer-in-Residence Jessie Montgomery, culminates with a concert featuring world premieres of chamber music by young composers from across the Chicagoland area. The season also includes the third annual Notes for Peace Reunion Concert on April 26, 2026, demonstrating the healing power of music in support of families who have lost loved ones to gun violence.

Throughout the season, Civic Fellows will collaborate with members of the International Contemporary Ensemble to curate a concert of music by living composers, and with New Music Chicago to present a dynamic program resulting from a call for scores. In a highlight of their multifaceted activities, Fellows will again partner with the Chicago Refugee Coalition to celebrate the stories and musical traditions of local refugee families through a special concert of music and spoken word.

The Civic Orchestra's 12th annual Bach Marathon returns on December 15, inviting communities across Chicago to celebrate the music of J.S. Bach. The day-long event, which features a variety of performances across the city, culminates in a highly anticipated finale concert at Fourth Presbyterian Church (126 E. Chestnut St., Chicago). This year's finale will showcase the imagination of Bach with four of the iconic *Brandenburg* Concertos alongside an inventive arrangement of Bach dances by Eric Nathan.

**[Explore](#) the Civic Orchestra of Chicago 2025/26 performance schedule and program listings.**

### **Civic at Symphony Center**

#### **Civic Plays Beethoven 5 ([October 27](#))**

Beethoven's Fifth Symphony encompasses one of the most gripping journeys in all orchestral music, from its fateful four-note opening to the triumphant coda. Ken-David Masur opens the program with Iman Habibi's *Every Tree Speaks* — a powerful, Beethoven-inspired response to the current environmental crisis — and Hindemith's *Symphonic Metamorphosis*, which brings the 19th-century sounds of Weber into the modern age. The program will also be performed at Senn High School (5900 N. Glenwood Ave., Chicago) on [Sunday, October 26, at 2:00 p.m.](#)

#### **Civic Plays The Planets ([November 17](#))**

Thomas Wilkins guides listeners on a cosmic journey through *The Planets*, Holst's interstellar suite spanning the ferocity of Mars to the ethereal stillness of Neptune. Drawing inspiration from the Orion Nebula and a Jewish harvest festival, James Lee III's

*Sukkot Through Orion's Nebula* shows why he's "a master colorist," whose score is "dazzlingly vivid and teems with detail" (*Gramophone*).

**Civic Plays Esmail, Elgar & Lutosławski** ([February 2, 2026](#))

Alpesh Chauhan makes his Civic Orchestra debut conducting Elgar's *In the South* (*Alassio*) — a sun-drenched tribute to the glories of ancient Rome. Premiered in 2018 at Wentz Concert Hall, Reena Esmail's evocative *Black Iris* is named after Georgia O'Keeffe's famous painting and inspired by the #MeToo movement. The program concludes with the irrepressible sweep and invention of Lutosławski's Concerto for Orchestra. A version of this program will also be performed by the Civic Orchestra at Kenwood Academy, as well as a side-by-side performance with Kenwood Academy High School Orchestra, (5015 S. Blackstone Ave., Chicago) on [Sunday, February 1, 2026, at 2:00 p.m.](#)

**Civic Wind Ensemble** ([February 16, 2026](#))

The Civic Orchestra explores the sublime and boundless world of wind ensemble music led by Mallory Thompson, who was director of bands at Northwestern University for nearly three decades. Globally recognized for her passionate, insightful interpretations, Thompson makes her Civic podium debut conducting landmark pieces from Mozart and Richard Strauss to Holst, Stravinsky and Tower. The program will also be performed at Vernon Hills High School including a collaborative performance with musicians of the school's band program on [Sunday, February 15, 2026, at 2:00 p.m.](#) (145 Lakeview Parkway, Vernon Hills).

**Civic Plays Price & Dvořák** ([March 2, 2026](#))

Ken-David Masur leads the Civic Orchestra in works by three titans of Black excellence in American music, starting with gems by George Walker and Ulysses Kay. Florence Price's *Ethiopia's Shadow in America* portrays an enslaved man's spiritual journey from the time of his arrival on this continent. Antonin Dvořák, a vital early champion of American music, imbues his lyrical and exuberant Seventh Symphony with admiration and hope for his own native Czech Republic. The program will also be performed at South Shore Cultural Center (7059 S. South Shore Dr., Chicago) on [Sunday, March 1, 2026, at 2:00 p.m.](#)

**Civic Plays Copland 3** ([March 30, 2026](#))

Carlos Miguel Prieto explores the vitality of music from across North America. Aaron Copland's Third Symphony is a work of majestic landscapes and postwar optimism, culminating in the inspirational *Fanfare for the Common Man*. Carlos Chávez evokes the rituals and splendor of pre-Columbian Mexico in his *Sinfonía india*. Michael Abels' *Delights & Dances* crackles with bluegrass, jazz and Latin dance rhythms. The program will also be performed at Wentz Concert Hall at North Central College (171 E. Chicago Ave., Naperville) on [Sunday, March 29, 2026, at 6:00 p.m.](#)

### **Civic Plays Mahler 1** ([May 4, 2026](#))

The opening chapter in Mahler's symphonic cycle doesn't hold back. A radiant musical sunrise sets the stage for folk dances, hunting scenes, a funeral procession and a storm-tossed finale that ends with a blaze of brass. Ken-David Masur begins the program with the jubilant prelude to the first act from Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* and Takemitsu's *Visions*, inspired by paintings at the Art Institute of Chicago and both commissioned and premiered by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in 1990. A version of this program will also be performed on [Sunday, May 3, 2026, at 2:00 p.m.](#) at New Trier High School (385 Winnetka Ave., Winnetka).

### **Civic & Ryan Opera Center** ([June 1, 2026](#))

Erina Yashima, former CSO Sir George Solti Conducting Apprentice, leads members of the Ryan Opera Center — the Lyric Opera of Chicago's renowned artist development program — and the Civic Orchestra of Chicago in an evening of opera arias, scenes and orchestral favorites.

### **Special Events at Symphony Center**

#### **IMPACT** ([March 15, 2026](#))

##### **Showcasing Education & Community Programs of the CSO**

Be inspired by the musicians who are learning, growing and serving Chicago through the programs produced by the Negaunee Music Institute at the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Enjoy a showcase of extraordinary performances by the Civic Orchestra of Chicago, musicians from the CSO, Percussion Scholarship Program students and more. Transform lives by supporting these vital education and community engagement activities.

### **Civic in the Community**

#### **Civic Plays Beethoven 5 at Senn High School** ([October 26](#))

The Civic Orchestra performs a community concert at Nicholas Senn High School (5900 N. Glenwood Ave., Chicago) led by Civic Principal Conductor Ken-David Masur. The program will also be performed at Symphony Center on [Monday, October 27, at 7:30 p.m.](#)

#### **Bach Marathon Finale Concert** ([December 15](#))

Steeped in the grandeur and intricacy of the Baroque age, J.S. Bach's *Brandenburg* Concertos are a showcase for his inexhaustible imagination. The surprises are endless — from the sumptuous string textures of No. 3 to the audacious harpsichord solo in No. 5. Ken-David Masur conducts the program's finale in a perfect complement to the

holiday season. The concert is presented at Fourth Presbyterian Church (126 E. Chestnut St., Chicago).

**Civic Plays Elgar & Lutosławski at Kenwood Academy ([February 1, 2026](#))**

The Civic Orchestra performs a community concert at Kenwood Academy High School (5015 S. Blackstone Ave., Chicago) led by Alpesh Chauhan, including a side-by-side performance with the Kenwood Academy High School Orchestra. The program, without the Kenwood Academy High School Orchestra, will be performed at Symphony Center on [Monday, February 2, 2026, at 7:30 p.m.](#)

**Civic Wind Ensemble at Vernon Hills High School ([February 15, 2026](#))**

The Civic Wind Ensemble performs a community concert led by former director of bands at Northwestern University Mallory Thompson at Vernon Hills High School in a collaborative performance with musicians of the Vernon Hills High School band program (145 Lakeview Parkway, Vernon Hills). The program, without musicians of the Vernon Hills High School band, will also be performed at Symphony Center on [Monday, February 16, 2026, at 7:30 p.m.](#)

**Civic Plays Price & Dvořák at South Shore Cultural Center ([March 1, 2026](#))**

The Civic Orchestra performs a free community concert led by principal conductor Ken-David Masur at South Shore Cultural Center (7059 S. South Shore Dr., Chicago). The program will be performed at Symphony Center on [Monday, March 2, 2026, at 7:30 p.m.](#)

**Civic Plays Copland 3 at Wentz Concert Hall ([March 29, 2026](#))**

The Civic Orchestra performs a community concert at Wentz Concert Hall at North Central College (171 E. Chicago Ave., Naperville), featuring soloists from D-Composed, a Chicago-based Black chamber music collective, and led by Carlos Miguel Prieto. The program will also be performed at Symphony Center on [Monday, March 30, 2026, at 7:30 p.m.](#)

**Civic Plays Mahler 1 at New Trier High School ([May 3, 2026](#))**

The Civic Orchestra performs a free community concert at New Trier High School (385 Winnetka Ave., Winnetka) led by principal conductor Ken-David Masur. The program will also be performed at Symphony Center on [Monday, May 4, 2026, at 7:30 p.m.](#)

**Civic Fellows**

Through an array of experiences designed to build and diversify creative and professional skills, the Civic Fellowship program empowers participants to realize their full potential as artistically excellent, civically engaged, collaborative and entrepreneurial musicians.

The program's curriculum has four major pillars: artistic planning, music education, social justice and project management. Fellows serve as facilitators in projects like [Notes for Peace](#), explore music by living composers, perform concerts at Symphony Center as well as in schools and communities across the city, mentor young musicians through the [CSO-Connect program](#), design and implement independent projects and more. Additionally, Fellows participate in enrichment activities including regular meetings as a cohort and professional development seminars with guest lecturers. Fellow reflections on past events and information about upcoming events can be found at [cso.org/civic](http://cso.org/civic).

### **Civic Fellows & International Contemporary Ensemble ([January 25, 2026](#))**

Civic Orchestra Fellows collaborate with members of the International Contemporary Ensemble to curate a concert of music by living composers. This program will take place at Epiphany Center for the Arts, located at 201 S. Ashland Ave., Chicago.

### **Civic Fellows & Chicago Refugee Coalition ([April 22, 2026](#))**

Join the Civic Fellows for the culminating event of the collaboration between the Negaunee Music Institute and the [Chicago Refugee Coalition](#). This concert celebrates the backgrounds, experiences and musical traditions of local refugee families through music and spoken word. This program will take place in Buntrock Hall at Symphony Center.

### **Civic Fellows & New Music Chicago ([May 17, 2026](#))**

In collaboration with New Music Chicago, Civic Orchestra Fellows perform a dynamic program featuring music selected from a call for scores. This program will take place in Buntrock Hall at Symphony Center.

### **Notes for Peace**

Launched in March 2018 in partnership with Purpose Over Pain, the Notes for Peace program uses the healing benefits of music to support families who have lost loved ones to gun violence.

### **Notes for Peace ([October 18](#))**

With guidance from the Civic Fellows, guest teaching artists from the U.K.-based Irene Taylor Trust and professional vocalists, parents from Purpose Over Pain compose, perform live and professionally record their music, which is then featured alongside family photos and lyrics on [notesforpeace.org](http://notesforpeace.org).

### **Notes for Peace Reunion ([April 26, 2026](#))**



In collaboration with Purpose Over Pain, the Negaunee Music Institute at the Chicago Symphony Orchestra presents this special concert celebrating eight years of the Notes for Peace program. Join Civic Orchestra of Chicago Fellows and the families of Purpose Over Pain, together with guest artists from the U.K.-based organization Irene Taylor Trust, Chicago-area vocalists and CSO Artist-in-Residence Joyce DiDonato, for an inspiring evening that demonstrates the healing power of music at 6:00 p.m. at Epiphany Center for the Arts (201 S. Ashland Ave., Chicago).

### **Young Composers Initiative**

With leadership from former CSO Mead Composer-in-Residence Jessie Montgomery, the Young Composers Initiative engages youth from across the Chicago region and empowers them to create new pieces of chamber music.

### **Young Composers Initiative Finale Concert ([June 12, 2026](#))**

In this season's culminating event, musicians of the Civic Orchestra of Chicago perform world premieres by the composers selected to participate in the program.

### **Crain-Maling Foundation CSO Young Artists Competition**

Founded in 1919, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra Youth Auditions have featured extraordinary young soloists from across Illinois. Now known as the [Crain-Maling Foundation CSO Young Artists Competition](#), this concerto competition identifies one outstanding young performer to be featured in a CSO School and Family Concert the following season. This year's competition is open to strings, and finalists will play one movement of a concerto on stage in Orchestra Hall, accompanied by the Civic Orchestra and conducted by Naomi Woo, in the final, public round on [Saturday, January 17, 2026, at 2:00 p.m.](#) This event is free and open to the public; tickets can be reserved two weeks prior to the event.

### **Supporters**

The 2025/26 Civic Orchestra season is generously sponsored by The Julian Family Foundation, which also provides major funding for the Civic Fellowship program.

Major support for the Civic Orchestra of Chicago is also provided by John and Leslie Burns; Robert and Joanne Crown Income Charitable Fund; Nancy Dehmlow; Leslie Fund, Inc.; the Maval Foundation; Judy and Scott McCue; Leo and Catherine† Miserendino; Barbara and Barre Seid Foundation; the George L. Shields Foundation, Inc.; and Paul and Lisa Wiggin.

The Civic Fellows & Chicago Refugee Coalition concert is generously sponsored by Theodore and Elisabeth Wachs.

The Young Composers Initiative is generously supported by Margo and Mike Oberman.

Support for the 2025/26 Notes for Peace program is provided by Megan and Steve Shebik, Theodore and Elisabeth Wachs and Lisa and Paul Wiggin.

The Principal Conductor chair is endowed by a generous gift from Robert Kohl and Clark Pellett.

### **Ticket Details**

Individual tickets for Civic Orchestra concerts in Orchestra Hall at Symphony Center and the Bach Marathon Finale are pay what you wish, starting at \$5. Tickets to Civic concerts in community venues are free, but advance reservations are required; all ticket reservations open two weeks prior to the performance date.

Contact Patron Services for personalized assistance online at [cso.org/contact](https://cso.org/contact) or by calling [312-294-3000](tel:312-294-3000), Monday-Saturday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

Artists, programs and prices are subject to change.

For more information about the Civic Orchestra of Chicago, visit [cso.org/civic](https://cso.org/civic).

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### **Chicago Symphony Orchestra: [cso.org](https://cso.org)**

Founded by Theodore Thomas in 1891, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra is consistently hailed as one of the world's great orchestras. In April 2024, Klaus Mäkelä was named the Orchestra's 11th music director, and he will begin an initial five-year tenure as Zell Music Director with the 2027/28 Season. Riccardo Muti, the Orchestra's 10th music director from 2010 until 2023, became Music Director Emeritus for Life at the beginning of the 2023/24 Season. Joyce DiDonato is the CSO Artist-in-Residence for the 2025/26 Season.

The CSO commands a vast repertoire, from baroque through contemporary music. Its renowned musicians perform more than 150 concerts annually, in Orchestra Hall at Symphony Center in downtown Chicago and each summer at the Ravinia Festival in suburban Highland Park. The ensemble regularly tours domestically, and since 1892, has made 65 international tours, performing in 30 countries on five continents.

Patrons around the globe enjoy weekly radio broadcasts of CSO concerts and recordings via the WFMT Radio Network and online at [cso.org/radio](https://cso.org/radio). Launched in 2007, [CSO Resound](https://cso.org/resound) is the ensemble's Grammy Award-winning independent record label, featuring live performances with world-class conductors and guest artists. Since 1916, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Chorus have amassed an extensive discography that has earned 65 Grammy awards from the Recording Academy.

The CSO is part of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra Association (CSOA), which also includes the Chicago Symphony Chorus, Civic Orchestra of Chicago, Symphony Center Presents and Negaunee Music Institute. The [Chicago Symphony Chorus](https://cso.org/chicago-symphony-chorus), founded by Margaret Hillis in 1957, is the country's largest professional chorus. Donald Palumbo is the Director of the Chicago Symphony Chorus. Founded



by second music director Frederick Stock during the 1919/20 Season, the [Civic Orchestra of Chicago](#) is a training ensemble for emerging professionals with Ken-David Masur serving as its principal conductor. [Symphony Center Presents](#) features guest artists and ensembles across an expansive array of genres, including classical, jazz, world and contemporary. The [Negaunee Music Institute](#) offers community and educational programs that annually engage more than 200,000 people of diverse ages and backgrounds throughout the Chicagoland area.

Through the Institute and numerous other activities — including annual free community concerts in Chicago neighborhoods — the CSO is committed to using the power of music to strengthen bonds with its longtime patrons and create connections with new audiences.

The Chicago Symphony Orchestra Association is supported by thousands of patrons, volunteers and institutional and individual donors. The Negaunee Foundation provides generous support in perpetuity for the work of the Negaunee Music Institute.